

CLAIMS

1. A method of establishing a contract and exchanging payments between a buyer and seller comprising the steps of:

5 the buyer and seller agreeing on a contract specifying terms and conditions;

the buyer and seller agreeing on a multi-stage payment plan;

the buyer depositing a payment in an escrow account representing a first payment of the multi-stage payment plan;

the seller withdrawing from the escrow account the first payment of the multi-stage

10 payment plan;

at a later time according to the multi-stage payment plan, the buyer depositing a payment in the escrow account representing a second payment of the multi-stage payment plan; and

the seller withdrawing from the escrow account the second payment of the multi-stage payment plan.

- 15 2. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the step of the buyer and seller agreeing on a contract specifying terms and conditions includes the step of the buyer and seller agreeing to a license for property.

- 20 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

the step of the buyer and seller agreeing on a contract specifying terms and conditions includes the step of the buyer and seller agreeing to a license for intellectual property.

- 25 4. A method of establishing a contract and exchanging services between a buyer and seller comprising the steps of:

a first party posting a message identifying one of a need and offer for a license;

a second party reviewing the message and responding to the message regarding the license;

the first party and second party agreeing on a payment plan and deliverable plan, wherein

30 one party is the buyer of the license and the other party is the seller of the license;

the buyer depositing an amount of money in an escrow account, according to the agreed upon payment plan; and

5 the seller performing action or refraining from action as required by the license, and when the deliverable is approved by the buyer, receiving from the escrow account the amount of money equal to the agreed upon payment plan.

10 5. The method of claim 4, wherein:

the action required by the seller is that of refraining from enforcing a property right against the buyer as required by the license.

15 6. The method of claim 4, wherein:

the step of the first party and second party agreeing on a payment plan and deliverable plan includes the step of the first party and second party agreeing on a multi-stage payment plan and respective deliverable plan;

20 the step of the buyer depositing an amount of money in an escrow account is performed according to the agreed upon multi-stage payment plan; and

25 the step of the seller performing the service is performed according to the agreed upon deliverable plan.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein:

the step of the first party and second party agreeing on a payment plan and deliverable plan includes the step of the first party and second party agreeing on a multi-stage payment plan and a respective multi-stage deliverable plan; and

25 the step of the seller performing the service is performed according to the agreed upon multi-stage deliverable plan and includes the step of when respective deliverables are delivered to and approved by the buyer, receiving from the escrow account the amount of money equal to the respective stage of the agreed upon multi-stage payment plan.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein:

the buyer depositing step includes the buyer depositing an amount of money in an escrow account, where the amount of money at least meets the first stage of the multi-stage payment plan; and

5 the seller performing step includes the seller performing the first stage of the multi-stage deliverable plan, and when the first stage deliverables are delivered to and approved by the buyer, receiving from the escrow account the amount of money equal to the first stage of the multi-stage payment plan.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of:

10 the seller being paid an advance prior to the multi-stage payment plan.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein:

the buyer depositing step includes the step of the buyer depositing an amount of money in the escrow account, where the amount of money at least meets the first stage and second stage of the multi-stage payment plan; and

when the seller performing the first stage step is complete, the buyer depositing an additional amount of money in the escrow account, where the amount of money at least meets the third stage of the multi-stage payment plan.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of:

the seller being paid an advance prior to the multi-stage payment plan.

12. An apparatus for establishing a contract and facilitating the exchange of services between a buyer and seller comprising:

25 a server including a memory configured to store a plurality of messages posted by first parties identifying one of a need and offer for services, wherein the server is accessible to second parties to review the messages and to respond to the messages and wherein one of the parties is the buyer and another of the parties is the seller;

30 a contract procedure configured to store a representations of contract terms agreed to between the buyer and seller, and wherein the memory is configured to store a message agreed to between the buyer and seller representing a payment plan and deliverable plan;

an escrow procedure configured to store a monetary representation of a deposit by the buyer equal to an amount of money in an escrow account, according to the agreed upon payment plan; and

5 wherein the escrow procedure includes a release procedure that is configured such that when the deliverable is delivered to and approved by the buyer, the release procedure releases from the escrow account the amount of money equal to the agreed upon payment plan.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein:

10 the service is a license to use a specific property and the deliverable is the action of refraining from enforcing a property right against the buyer based on the contract.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein:

the message agreed to between the buyer and seller is a multi-stage payment plan and respective deliverable plan.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein:

the message agreed to between the buyer and seller is a multi-stage payment plan and respective multi-stage deliverable plan.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein:

the escrow procedure is configured to accept the buyer depositing an amount of money in an escrow account, where the amount of money at least meets the first stage of the multi-stage payment plan; and

25 the release procedure is configured such that when the seller performs the first stage of the multi-stage deliverable plan, and when the first stage deliverable is delivered to and approved by the buyer, the release procedure releases from the escrow account the amount of money equal to the first stage of the multi-stage payment plan.

17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein:

30 the escrow procedure includes the seller being paid an advance prior to the multi-stage payment plan.

18. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein:

the escrow procedure is configured to accept the buyer depositing an amount of money in an escrow account, where the amount of money at least meets the second stage of the multi-stage payment plan; and

the release procedure is configured such that when the seller performs the second stage of the multi-stage deliverable plan, and when the second stage deliverable is delivered to and approved by the buyer, the release procedure releases from the escrow account the amount of money equal to the second stage of the multi-stage payment plan.

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19. The apparatus of claim 18, further comprising the step of:

the escrow procedure includes the seller being paid an advance prior to the multi-stage payment plan.

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